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# SCR

## *Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR*

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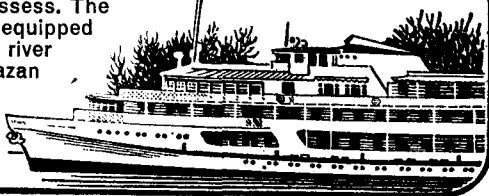
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# Fiftieth Anniversary

*L. Crome*

Three important anniversaries within 5 years—the fiftieth of the October revolution, the hundredth of Lenin's birth, and now again the fiftieth—of the formation of the Soviet Union in December, 1922, have come too close upon each other not to blunt the singularity of each one. Some of us are never too happy with anniversaries—milestones of mortality, which deflect one's gaze from the present to the past. Yet by the time this issue of the journal is read the new anniversary will be acclaimed all over the world, particularly in the Soviet Union. And rightly so, since it is scarcely possible to overstate the far-reaching consequences of the event it commemorates.

Multinational states, such as the Roman or British empires, existed, of course, through history but have always been based on domination by one of the nations. The USSR is the first state formed by equal national republics, each multinational, and each socialist in structure. It is this that endowed it with a potentiality for exceptional progress and enabled it to surmount internal and external stresses that would surely have torn apart any other state.

In our highly vulnerable world, riven and plagued by nationalisms, it is encouraging to recall that many equal nations can live in friendship under the same sky, can build jointly a new way of life with separate traditions cross-fertilising and supplementing each other. Since national prejudices die hard, the task of eliminating these proved harder than anyone anticipated. Friendship calls for constant vigilant cultivation.

Celebrations in the Soviet Union began with a "vstrecha", a conference of the representatives of friendship societies and societies for cultural relations from most countries and from Soviet organisations. It took place in what must be one of the most beautiful halls in the world, the Moscow House of the Trade Unions, one of the palaces which remained after the fire of Moscow, which is described by Tolstoy as the venue of the meeting of Tsar Alexander with the nobility. It lasted three days and was opened with a report by Madame N. V. Popova, the Chairman of the Union of the Soviet Friendship Societies. The report was a tour d'horizon scanning some of the enormous achievements of the state, analysing its international significance and its present role in the preservation of peace and cooperation in the world. (This report has been printed in English as a supplement to the *Moscow News*, No. 40, 1972.) Almost all foreign guests and many Soviet participants took part in

the ensuing discussion confirming from their own experiences and enlarging on certain problems raised by Madame Popova. No contentious issues were raised in any of the contributions. The discussion was finally summarised in a resolution adopted unanimously by the whole of the conference.

Our Society is commemorating the Anniversay in a number of ways which have or will be brought to the notice of the membership. The chief single event was a lecture by Ivor Montagu on October 2nd published elsewhere in this issue. Since, as mentioned, anniversaries stimulate retrospection, it may be of interest to recall here a few events in the life of our Society.

The inaugural meeting of the Society was held on July 9th, 1924, when Professor Hobhouse was elected President. Next year Professor Lascelles Abercrombie became President and held office for many years. Vice-Presidents included E. M. Forster, Julian Huxley, J. M. Keynes, H. G. Wells and Virginia Woolf. Thus, some of the more far-sighted Englishmen and at least one English woman recognized already in those early days the need for better understanding of the Soviet Union.

A public meeting held a little later was devoted to the health services in the USSR. From that time onward this subject never ceased to interest forward-looking doctors and other health workers in this country and our Society did its best to satisfy their quest for information. As a result a new organisation, the Socialist Medical Association, was formed with the express object of furthering the introduction of a similar service in this country and this aim was ultimately included in the programme of the Labour Party. During the war a Royal Commission was set up to plan future social services. Their report—the so-called Beveridge Report—included a recommendation in favour of a National Health Service. Eventually this became law and the service came into being in July 1948, some 30 years after its introduction in Russia. It is now one of the most cherished services in the country.

The economist, J. M. Keynes, gave a lecture to the Society on November 3rd, 1925, after his visit to Russia. To quote the report : “he said that he could not subscribe to the new official faith of Russia, nor agree with much that was occurring, nor did he consider that the actual form of the economic experiment gave much help towards solving the problems of Western Europe. But the vigorous life that was showing itself, and the efforts to create standards of value in which desire for individual wealth had small part were striking and he desired to help and not hinder. He concluded by saying that he believed that during the next 50 years Russia would make a larger contribution to the world than any other country”.

Interest in Russian culture has always played an important part

in improving relations between Great Britain and the USSR. It was, for example, a brilliant idea of Ambassador Ivan Maisky, who, by the way, will always hold a special place in our memories and affection, to persuade one of our publishers to produce a cheap edition of *War and Peace*. This became a best-seller. Its publication was soon followed by serialisation on the radio. The BBC then managed to produce it without, as they are doing now, wrapping up each part in the tsarist national anthem. I overheard one of the company commanders of the regiment in which I served during the war saying that *War and Peace* was the best novel he had read, second only to *Gone With the Wind*.

A subject always close to the centre of our vision was Soviet education. It soon became clear to all who would not stay blind that education through thick and thin, at all cost, even when people went barefoot and hungry, would one day take the Soviet people to a top place in science and culture. Final proof that this had indeed happened came on April 12th, 1961, when Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space. A little later he was in London and after lunch with the Queen visited the Society. It is not known what transpired at the Palace but Yuri Gagarin certainly knew that at 14 Kensington Square he was among friends. Some educationists in Britain and America are much given to speculating on the correlation between intelligence and the colour of one's skin, on whether special educational measures are called for for people with darker skins or on the other side of the Irish channel. No such questions were ever asked in the Soviet Union. All they worried about was how to get as many teachers and schools as possible to the farthest corners of their country. The result is that scientists of all nationalities now rub shoulders with each other in all their academies.

This is not the place to discuss the many other aspects of our work but, perhaps, enough has been said to indicate the modest but not insignificant part that we have played with the help of our Soviet friends. It is in the hope that we can do even better in the ensuing second half-century that we welcome the present Anniversary.

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### Errata

The editor regrets two errors crept into the last issue. The last line of the second poem by Maxim Tank was omitted; it reads 'And a long tongue'. The article on Peter the Great was written by Miss S. E. Eeles, Museum Assistant, Department of Astronomy, National Maritime Museum.

# The Impact of Soviet Culture

## 1922 - 1972

*Ivor Montagu*

The subject is one much bigger than can possibly be dealt with either in the compass of the time allotted or, indeed, by any one person. I am certainly not a polymath or sufficient expert in all forms of culture, nor have I been so ubiquitous as to know what has been the impact of Soviet culture in all the corners of the earth. I have probably been invited to give this address because I am old and garrulous, and have been around while all this was happening, that is, for the last fifty years. So it ought to be possible for me at least to start a few hares to think over and that is what I will try to do.

The first point I intend to raise is: What is culture? This may sound frivolous and pedantic, but it is not. As Perry Mason says whenever the Judge or the District Attorney objects: "I intend to connect it up".

The point is that there has been a tremendous change in the meaning of the word and people who are young enough not to have been around fifty years ago, when the SCR was born, can have no idea of the degree to which nobody then could define it, or even try to define it, in the 1920's, because it was not then a word that, in common speech, the English really used at all.

*Culture*—what *did* it mean for us in the 1920's? One meaning came from the propaganda slogans of the First World War, at that time not long over. This was the German word *kultur*. All it made us think of was Kaiser Bill and a figure with a baby on a bayonet marching across the world in jackboots to demonstrate the superiority of German *kultur*. By association, culture was primarily a sarcastic word, a pretentious term to be derided, and one which no Englishman would use seriously at all. It aroused in us the same kind of feeling as that expressed much later by Goering's favourite author when he made a character say "When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver".

Next it embarrassed us in another way. It had a second significance in English. It meant not eating peas with your knife. In this sense it expressed a sort of smug snobbery; it conveyed the distinction we nowadays convey by the labels U and non-U. No gentleman would use it because to do so would inevitably rub it in to the lower orders that he was cultured and they were not, and if he did *that* it would prove that he himself was not a gentleman at all. So



no one used it. And when we of the SCR found that we were committed to the title of Cultural Relations, because that was the title everyone was going to adopt on the pattern of the Moscow one, we were acutely embarrassed by it. It was embarrassing because, in English then, it sounded pretentious to those we hoped to approach.

Of course there was—as there is—a technical meaning of the word culture, which is used in all languages, though not in ordinary speech. This is the antiquarian and ethnological study sense of the word, which is very different from the meaning with which we are concerned. In such studies one talked of Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age cultures. These names were given them by the tools they characterised. But this is quite opposite to culture in the sense of our activities at the SCR for fifty years and in the sense of Soviet culture that we are now to examine. The ethnological sense is production—“culture” for us is what Marxists call the superstructure.

So you see that this quibble about words turns out to be something bigger after all. The interesting thing is that I am having to point this out to you because of something that happened fifty years ago and that hardly anybody today realises it because now this new use of ‘culture’ has “come in”, not just as a vogue word but as a really useful word. Its conception has given rise to activities all over the world. Every government that can afford to nowadays tries to establish “cultural relations” and make the culture of its own people known to peoples in other countries. Even our own country, over the steadfast opposition of at least one press lord, has its body called the British Council. Almost every embassy nowadays would feel itself bare without a cultural attaché, whose special job it is to do this work. In other words, this conception of culture as a thing that sums up what might be called the intellectual way of life, the thought and associated goings on of a country, and the idea that exchanging understanding of one another in this field could help to promote good friendly relations, the idea that started with the Societies for Cultural Relations and the Soviet initiative about them, has now become a word meaning these activities to everybody and a thing that everybody tries to do.

I take this to be one of the most important results of cultural impact from the Soviet Union that everybody now understands culture in this sense.

If we were now to try to look *seriatim* how we in our Society have practically understood our task of exchanges in this sense we should be in for a big job. Ballet, Cinema, Education, Graphic Arts, History, Law, Literature, Medicine, Music, Science, Theatre, T.V.—these are just a dozen of the special supplements we have published and there are plenty more. (Incidentally, Lord Snow spoke of Science and the Humanities as two cultures; I am afraid from my

list we have only balanced them as one and a half cultures—science and medicine look outweighed.) It is quite obvious that we cannot examine all these subjects in one talk. If each took up only five minutes, that would at once overflow our full hour. But fortunately our theme is not an examination of the cultural achievements of the Soviet Union, or the weighing up of opinions of what in each of these fields there has been notable. It is to be an attempt to look at some ways in which impacts have been made and the effects resulting from these impacts. This will probably be a more profitable approach.

### Impact on whom

So the second point I intend to raise is the problem of the impact *on whom*. Culture, the culture of a country in all its various categories, does not always impact on other peoples directly. I now live in summer in the Orkneys, having retired there not to be, like Greta Garbo, alone, but far enough away to get work done in distant northern isles. The very first day I arrived there, late at night, the telephone bell rang (which startled me because I had arranged to be ex-directory) and a voice said: “We are . . . (I will not name it, a well-known Soviet newspaper), speaking from Moscow”, and I interrupted rudely to ask: “How did you find my telephone number?” To which they replied firmly: “Comrade Montagu, we know everything.”

I might have found this sinister if it had not been that I am an NUJ member and know that such boasting is part of the small-change of journalistic bluff.

The voice went on to ask: “Will you please tell us what is the reaction of the British public to Comrade Khrushchev’s speech of yesterday?” I had, of course, to explain, first of all, that there was only a small section of the British public in the part of the world I happened to be in. Second, that it was probable that there had been no reaction at all because, so far as I could tell from the radio and newspapers, the speech had not been reported. Third, that as the communications media in my country were largely unsympathetic to Soviet policy—which they ought to know—they should not be surprised because that was what usually happened.

The point is, something quite important culturally can happen in the Soviet Union but it doesn’t necessarily have an effect because it may not get through.

This same point arose again in another form at a meeting of the World Peace Council Bureau that we held in Vienna. This was the first time our Bureau had met in Vienna and our arrival there had been the cause of some controversy among various local political parties who thought, or pretended to think, that this was the start of some mysterious plot endangering the state.

It had therefore been thought advisable by the Bureau—of which

I was a member—to hold this first Bureau meeting as an open session which the press could attend. Now this had been against my views, and for some reason a devil got into me and I had a violent argument with one of my colleagues, Ilya Ehrenburg. We were discussing an innocuous resolution about promoting cultural relations for the sake of mutual understanding. Now for him there was no impact like the impact of writers—an example of the old English proverb that to a cobbler there is nothing like leather. He had the firm conviction that the writer was *the* important person who could be effective in influencing the world. In our resolution we were discussing the ways in which the peace movement could encourage cultural relations and we started to list, unfortunately, the various things that were culture and one of these was, of course, literature. I wickedly suggested the addition of sport. This caused trouble immediately.

I do not know whether this was a relic of that intellectual snobbery that I mentioned earlier as being associated with the word culture, the sense of a gentleman not using a knife to eat his peas. (I regret to say, incidentally, that this sense does still exist in the Soviet Union now—if you go there you will find it impossible to buy kvas—a perfectly good and wholesome drink anciently associated with local culture and respectably manufactured by the city trust—in any hotel or cafe but can only get it on the streets. A distinguished Soviet writer, Konstantin Simonov, and I, in order that this omission should be properly defied, had to found a Society for *Uncultural Relations* in order to drink kvas. Wherever two or more people meet to drink it, they are qualified to join.) Anyway, sport seemed to be something like kvas-drinking. Ehrenburg would not have it. It could let down the literary tone. I remembered that our SCR had had a Chess supplement and I dug my heels in. We argued for three hours. I said it was all very well for him to talk about writers but what Soviet writers get published in Britain anyway and, if they do, who buys their books and reads them? At most it might be a few hundreds. If you send a football team over there will be tens of thousands who will know about it. If you send a horse there will be millions. I went out of the hall later for a moment and discovered at the telephone booth an agitated representative of the *Herald Tribune* telephoning frantically to New York about a split in the peace movement. But there were no splits, because in the end we reached a compromise. Ehrenburg agreed to the inclusion of the word sport if I would agree to include the word tourism.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that both these things are a part of culture. The people who travel to and fro between countries, the people who have visited the Soviet Union, who have seen its people, its theatres, its shops, its art, its way of living, they will have learned something not unimportant about the Soviet people.

And the Soviet sportsman who visits other countries may convey something of the dignity of the Soviet way of life too. Winning or losing is secondary though it may seem vital enough at the time. I remember the first Soviet football team to visit Britain, the Dynamo, that came just after World War II, and I had pulled strings to get a whole row of tickets at the Arsenal ground for the members of the Friends of the Soviet Union Executive, the staff of the *Daily Worker* and the *Labour Monthly* board. I remember the excitement with which we all shouted, like everybody else: "Shoot the Ref!" when he would not give a penalty against the Soviet team. The important thing was that the public, now at last it had the chance, irrespective of the results, appreciated the discipline, the sportsmanship, and the skill of the Soviet players. It *reached the masses*.

I want to place this in the same useful category as the achievements of skilful people, brave people, innovators—people with a tinge of accomplishment so great that it evades suppression and becomes NEWS even for the west; these all, whatever their sphere, make an important contribution to the cultural impact. In the earlier times it used to be suggested that all the new buildings were merely painted on glass, the tanks were made of cardboard, and nothing Soviet really worked. When, however, things did begin to work visibly or undeniably, like the sputniks, when something especially dramatic occurred, like Filatov doing his eye operations, or the early flights across the North Pole, when the great musicians appeared in public in the West, and Soviet people began to do well at sports that previously those they visited regarded as their own monopoly, then each of these successes contributed to a total that impressed the world with the novel notion that perhaps the Soviet system could not, after all, be such a clumsy business as their papers told them.

The work of cultural relations in detail, however, the kind of thing this Society does, does not influence the masses directly. For the most part anyway it has to be done in terms of specialist to specialist contact. I do not mean to suggest that this does not eventually have a wider influence, filtering on. For example, admittedly *The Times* now has a circulation bigger than that of the *Morning Star*, though for some years the former and the latter's predecessor—*The Daily Worker*—were running almost neck and neck. Its small circulation did not prevent *The Times* from claiming that it was the most influential of all papers (though perhaps the most influential of all was Claude Cockburn's tiny *The Week*, because people kept passing on its revelations and they were all convincing). *The Times'* boast was and is that its readership consisted of "top people"; these influence a few others, who influence a few more, and so forth. In our type of society, this effect is a real one. If the specialists in each field are impressed—and they are—by the work

of their opposite numbers in the USSR whose specialities they understand, if scientists are influenced by Soviet science, educationists by Soviet education and so forth, then this rubs off on other people and eventually this has a wider impact even where the Soviet achievements do not spread wide directly. This—with reciprocity of course—is SCR sort of work.

## Films

I think there is only one field in which something like a direct public impact was attained, and that was in the silent film. The silent cinema for a very short time gave those of us who worked with it the opportunity to produce a cultural object that could have a direct international effect. It was very, very cheap to change the titles. This meant that there was almost no economic or technical obstacle in those days to prevent the silent film, as a creative object, going from country to country without comprehensibility frontiers. There were two directions in particular in which it influenced people. One was that the great Soviet masters, possibly because in the early days after the October revolution they did not have much film to play around with—and so unlike film makers elsewhere had time to think before they shot—and possibly because they were trying to deal with serious subjects (partly one, partly the other) found out exactly how film effects were made. And second, there was the application of these discoveries to the handling of real material so as to make documentary films. I happen to think that the British documentary people learned so well from this that afterwards their work was in advance of that of most of the Soviet documentarians. It does happen that sometimes the teacher forgets what he has taught. I remember once Pudovkin made a film and I asked him: “Why did you do so and so in this film that was exactly contrary to what you wrote in such and such an early book?” “Did I write that?” he exclaimed.

The British school of documentary arose on the example of two bases; a Soviet film called *Turksib* and Eisenstein’s handling of real material in his far from documentary film *Potemkin* which was studied as well as titled by Grierson in New York.

These two approaches to cinema—the theoretical and the documentary—were tremendously fertile and led to a whole series of world wide developments.

But technique changes. With the arrival of talkies Soviet films could no longer exercise their impact. The film became national again linguistically bound. It is very difficult technically to transfer the effect of a talkie from one language to another without loss of power. Dubbing means that the performers, face plus voice, are never quite the same whole people however well you do it. Titling means that the audience, if it wants to get the full effect of the film,

has to watch the face of the actors in the middle of the screen at the same time as it reads the words at the bottom of the screen. Which can't be done. One has to keep the words to a minimum to manage at all. The fact is that, with the coming of talk, the better a film is, the deeper it delves into humanity, the more difficult it is to convert; just as in a classical novel, character depends on conversation and it won't cross the frontier. The only films that travel nowadays are films of stars, erotic films and films of battles. The first two the Soviet cinema doesn't make and their films of battles look and sound much like anyone else's films of battles, although the uniforms may be different. The mass impact abroad of Soviet culture in film has tended to end with the end of silent cinema.

In a similar way other technical developments have led to other disappointments. You may remember the slogan of early days outside Broadcasting House, that no longer exists, and which said: "Nation shall speak peace unto nation". I don't know when this came down—perhaps when peace became a dirty word—but in any case the TV that has so largely replaced radio has neither the same distance of pick-up nor therefore does it offer the same encouragement for international cultural sharing that seemed so hopeful in the early days of radio. Those who can recall those days will remember that before World War II every paper shop stocked a little paper—called, I think, *World Radio*—that gave the programmes of radio broadcasts from all over the world on their variety of wavelengths. I don't know whether it is still possible for the hams to still get such a thing, but in the specialist press available to the general public—the *Radio Times* and the *TV Times*—only native transmissions are given. The modern techniques of communication that held the power of linking the people are content now not to do so.

I should like now to turn to another *general* aspect. For the mass of people outside the Soviet Union, those who have not visited the Soviet Union on a tour, nor have enjoyed the brush-off of indirect benefits derived from the direct contacts of specialists with specialists, nor have had the pleasure and the luck themselves to come in contact with the visits of artistic and sports groups—that is, those who know Soviet culture only through third-party, and often not very friendly, comment, the repute of Soviet culture has passed through three stages.

In its first stage it made, at the time, the impact of being a period of tremendous experimentation in all the arts. The second seemed a period of pressure for conformity. The third, and present, stage—thanks to tremendous cold war efforts in this field, is not seen at all clearly.

I am going to make a point about the first stage. It relates to a book by a Russian author, published in the West but not in the Soviet Union. The author was a talented writer, an artist in words,

and in this, his first novel, no one can deny the vividness of his description of nature and personal feeling. I refer to *Dr. Zhivago*.

In passing, I will admit to a prejudice against this book. I dislike it because of what the hero does, or rather, what he fails to do. I am not against hippies; they are youngsters who contract out of modern society because they feel frustrated, can find no worthwhile ideals and have never found out how to work constructively with other people to change it. The hippy is one of the victims. But I must say that a person who contracts out, as Dr. Zhivago does, and goes off to grow potatoes when he is a doctor, a man trained and relied upon to do his utmost to combat disease, at a time when all around is plague and famine, he seems to me not to be the sort of man worthy to be a hero of any sort of story. He has no sympathy from me, and I was sorry he evidently had the sympathy of his author and of quite a lot of Western readers.

But what was particularly startling about the book is that it seemed generally to be accepted as truthful and historical. The immediate post-revolution and civil war period in the USSR—despite its hardships—was without doubt the free-est period, so far as lavish and diverse experiment in arts and literature are concerned, that has occurred anywhere in any part of the world so far. Its author has apparently forgotten this and made the kernel of the book his own mental confusion that transferred to those days the conformity that did not occur until later. And no one among its readership abroad, and the many critics concerned to praise it as a revelation, seemed at all to notice this confusion—such, presumably, is the power of the cold war brain-washing to which they have been subjected.

Incidentally, and as a salutary digression, I may note that an honest man, an English clergyman active in the peace movement, told me of this book, being so much lauded by persons hostile to the Soviet Union, and said that until he had read it he never so much understood, appreciated and respected the Soviet Union as he did afterwards. It had opened his eyes, he said, because he never realised, before, the ordeals of the people of the Soviet Union in the revolution and the efforts they had to make to succeed in overcoming them. Certainly, and this is perhaps a useful thought, it is very difficult to anticipate what effects literary, artistic or other cultural works are really going to have on people.

It is right to observe that, whereas the cold war is declining a bit in certain other relations, has even worn away in the diplomatic and political fields, with conferences now at least on the agenda, and in the military field pacts beginning to be signed, with new relationships and cultural agreements beginning to be broached, this détente has not occurred in the west in literature.

It is the case that here in Britain and in most “western” countries any book, whether published in the Soviet Union or not, that comes



from a Soviet author and can be construed as critical is immediately sure of publication and welcome irrespective of literary merit. It will be written up as though it typified everything of any value being produced in the Soviet intellectual world—a cold war fiction carefully preserved because no other type of Soviet literary production is granted like access to the reading public. Is it possible to find a dozen literary works by Soviet authors published over here in the last ten years, a half a dozen in the last five, other than the denigratory ones?

I do not believe that no such books worthy of translation and publication have been written. I am not a person who reads Russian easily and cannot tell from my own knowledge of Russian literature who are the best authors of today. I do know that during the war, in the interval between the initial hostility toward the Soviet Union and the cold war that began later, there were published in Britain and America numerous books by Soviet authors giving a picture of the people and their strivings, some in peacetime, some in wartime settings, but all of which fascinated the public and were eagerly read by them. It is difficult to believe that suddenly in the Soviet Union all the worthwhile writers have gone dry and that there are no books like that worth reading being published there any more.

I make this point so strongly because, in spite of my leg-pull battle with Ehrenburg, I recognise that the writer does, or at least can, serve an important function in cultural relations and the making of cultural impacts. I remember Stalin's words about the writer being "the engineer of the soul". These words of course described an attitude toward the writer in Russia characteristic even long before Stalin's day, because, much more than here, Russian writer, reader and critic have all appreciated the formative role that the writer plays in creating the mind and soul of his reader and his consequent responsibility. But now we are being deprived of proper contact with the Soviet people and their culture through their literature. We should not, in natural pride at our Society's record of over 50 years work not ineffective on the whole, be complacent. There is a big gap here still to be filled.

These gaps help the cold war warriors—alas, such still exist and perhaps in this field more than any other—to maintain for the general public here the impression that nothing at all has changed since the time of greater uniformity and to use the faults of another period to insinuate identical intolerances today. The operation of censorship in the Soviet Union is an easy target in this respect, and it is quite true that many of us in this country do not understand why it should be necessary nowadays for it to be operated in certain ways that are reported. But we do know that the issue is presented with a monstrous ignoring of fairness and of a



number of highly relevant facts. It is too easy to be conscious of the notes in the other fellow's eye.

If comparisons are made in practice, rather than in form, quite different conclusions are apt to appear. For example, in the Soviet lands of laws and collegiate and government responsibility for social decisions based on—right or wrong—interpretations of community health, there is certainly a much wider acquaintance with recent and modern English language writers than is current in England or the USA, where restrictive laws are few but the effective choice lies freely with editors and publishers, in respect to corresponding Soviet writers.

The practical side is useful in properly judging opportunity of creation, too. An example from the cinema. I have just seen a very important Soviet film. I regard it as a masterpiece. The second film of a young director, *Andrei Rublev*, it was held up by the Soviet censorship for two years. A lot of people in the Soviet Union, who had seen it, thought this wrong. And a lot abroad, who had not, used it as a stick to beat Soviet culture. I kept an open mind for the time being. Now it has been released—with some cuts that I am confident have not diminished it—I can perfectly understand the hesitation just as I am delighted with the release. The impact of the film is one of immense beauty, power and horror. The Soviet public has greeted it with interest, outcry and argument—just as a similar production would arouse here (if it were to reach the screen). But here the cruelty is no self-indulgent exercise of the imagination, no catchpenny exploitation as would so often (I do not say always) be the motive here. It is a deep examination of the problem of the artist: how should he act, how can he create, in a world of horror he cannot avert? This is an intensely modern problem; truth both to its essence and to the chosen medieval setting require the ruthlessness. I am for the film.

But the point is this film-maker did not spend the period idle but was working on continually, further picture-making with the same enormous resources at his disposal, and to such purpose that the new work has already won international prizes. I am quite certain that in practice, and whatever reservations we British cultural characters care to cherish because the set-up there is so different, there is far more chance for creation in the Soviet cinema, with its schooling and training in regular production for successive generations of talent, than there is for any sort of film-making in this country where, of 5,000 members of my Union, the ACTT, skilled in film-making, only 500 are in regular production, where half the area of the only three remaining studios is about to be hived off for more profitable "development", where many who do, against all obstacles, try to make films may have to wait longer than in the Soviet Union for showing, even when they have pre-arrangement

for distribution and, without a release from a big circuit, may find their films unavailable to the generality despite critical acclaim.

### Graphic arts

Of all the prevailing tendencies, during the period of encouragement of uniformity in the Soviet Union, that I found hardest to take, was the vigour of the indignation against experimentation in the graphic arts. I am not myself an enthusiast for non-representational art, but I have never been able to understand—and have said so to my Soviet friends—why it should be acceptable to have non-representation horizontal, in a pattern on a floor carpet, but the same principle applied vertically, to a picture on the wall, became almost an instance of counter-revolution. One can understand there is a real problem, always, about novelty, and it is not simple at first to distinguish between what may be a new, brilliant way of seeing and what may merely be charlatanism to mask incompetence. Even a sound innovation sometimes requires subterfuge.

I recall a delightful story Ehrenburg told me. He had an enormous number of Picassos given to him in the days of his youth and they were hung on the walls of his flat. One day a constituent called on him and was waiting in his sitting-room. The picture behind the visitor happened to be one of Picasso's set of illustrations to Buffon, the picture of the toad—it looks most revolting. As Ehrenburg came in he discovered his visitor squinting at it over his shoulder in some trepidation. "Remarkable, is it not," said Ehrenburg. "A caricature of American imperialism." "Oh, yes, wonderful, Comrade Ehrenburg, wonderful, a true likeness," the visitor hastened to agreed.

Our clever boys of today would like to forget some of the ludicrous and now shameful-to-look-back-upon episodes in the art histories of their own countries, the mockery, boycotts and even virtual persecution by the art establishments of the clearest work of the impressionists that the public finds normal and delightful almost everywhere today. (And the vigorous denunciation of post impressionists by such pundits as Munnings and Churchill even into the middle of this century). It is much easier to jeer at the Soviet Union, whose art establishment was similarly slow-moving, and to burke the real developments that do occur.

Liveliness is all. I remember in the early days when I went to the Soviet Union in the twenties, the impressionists were even then causing debate. In the marvellous museum where the best only were kept, there was a fascinating book of comments. One visitor had written: "This exhibition shows the decadence and degeneracy of the bourgeoisie". And the next one (who appended to his signature the name of his YCL branch): "This opinion shows the idiocy of the person writing it".

There followed a period when these pictures became “unkosher”. No one seemed quite to know what had happened to them. There were rumours that the Picassos at least had been done away with.

One day, just after the war, the Dean of Canterbury, Professor Bernal and I were in the Soviet Union for a peace gathering and we took the opportunity to go to the Pushkin Museum. The director, a gigantic man with a huge beard, who made no less huge statues—named Merkurov—nearly burst with indignation when we told him of the rumour: “How can people think us such barbarians!” He shewed us photographs of the many rooms in the Museum that had been destroyed by German bombs. He assured us that everything was safe, and the Museum was being rebuilt; gallery after gallery was being brought back into service. He explained that a start had been made with the primitives for the French gallery, and that, period by period, all rooms would be restored. Picasso? Well, he was still some way ahead, but the Barbizoin room might be opened soon. He took us to have an advance peep. At the end of one gallery there was a little door in one corner with a heavy plush curtain concealing it. The giant director flung back the curtain, but a tiny cleaning woman, who had been standing near, about a third of his size, rushed forward and grasped his arm: “Comrade Director, you know it is forbidden to go in there.”

Anyway, anyone who now goes to the Pushkin can see all these pictures, and more, displayed in all their glory. There have been special exhibitions; the Pushkin has them continuously. There have been Picasso retrospectives, and now Guttusos. I can assure you that young Russians, and the activity of artists elaborating on the wholly different traditions of the non-Russian peoples, are responding by variety, initiative in style, originality more diverse than—alas—has yet impacted on us abroad. There is plenty of bunk, too, of course. In what country is there not? What we need to see, and read, but as yet do not, is the whole living essence, and the curtains that obscure it must be torn down.

Well, I think you will agree that my warning has come true that you would get from me no very coherent picture, but I hope that some of those hares have been started out of their forms, and you may yourselves receive the impulse to chase them, and see what life and change really brings out—for the job is still there to clear those curtains and give the chance for impacts—each way—to be more effective.

I have however a conclusion to give you before we end. If we are to throw our minds back and ask ourselves *now*, how would the question of Keynes be answered?

What has been the major impact—not the little detailed impacts or those in the many fields of sociology and politics that we have not looked at—but what is the major feature that emerges in looking

back over the fifty years? Is there something that the Soviet Union has brought to the world in cultural life that could make a parallel, for example, to the shake-up caused in its day by the French Revolution, associated with the slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"? There were of course many respects in which the society that emerged after the French revolution did not truly realise these values. Its colonial attitude, for example, was a denial of liberty, equality and fraternity in many things. But it served as an inspiration that was not limited to France and that threw tyrants everywhere on the defensive. It was an inspiration that lasted.

What has been the inspiration emerging from the Soviet Union in the cultural field?

I think it was one of the most important things in the history of the world, and I hope that you will not think that the answer I am going to give is trivial.

### Cultivating talent

You see, I don't think it very important which great sportsmen make their mark. Geniuses can be born anywhere. I shock some of my Soviet friends when I say that I do not think it to be important whether an American or a Russian is champion of the world at chess, or who gets the most gold medals at the Olympic Games. What I do think is important is opening the gates to talent; the arousing of interest and the provision of opportunities for everyone willing and able to express themselves in all the various ways open to man.

The first time that it was impressed on me that this was beginning to happen occurred already in the twenties, when I happened to be in the Soviet Embassy in London when Capablanca came in to get a visa for the first big chess tournament in the Soviet Union. I followed this up when Capablanca and Lasker were in the Soviet Union for this tournament. They played a series of simultaneous exhibitions and never won a majority of games. It was quite unheard of in chess that a master meets enthusiasts in chess clubs and does not win the vast majority of games; perhaps two or three drawn and only one lost. It created a sensation that there were so many people who had taken interest enough in a subject and become so good at it. This incident extended our understanding of the capacity latent in human beings.

In the 1930's, I was in the Soviet Union again and I went to a meeting in a club-room where a young man came to tell us of an ascent he and others had just made in a balloon. This was long before the days of sputniks. I do not remember how high he had reached, but it was something incredible for those days—thirteen miles, ten miles, six or seven, it does not matter. He told us about the achievement with pride. One remembered however that Piccard

had been pretty high, and also that it was the fashion in those days for claims constantly to be made that the Soviet Union was the first. Many people abroad did not accept these claims as true—even when in fact they happened to be right as, for example, with Popov and Marconi. They seemed to have a chauvinistic tinge. But as the talk went on I realised that this young man's pride had quite a different basis. The significance of the feat was that this young man and his companions had done everything about it, design, building, training, and so on, and that only a few months before they had all been railway apprentices.

Yet one more instance came from war time. We learned of Chukchis—northern people from the veriest far-east Polar region of Siberia—a people whose culture up to the revolution was practically Neolithic, a people whose whole development and acquaintance with modern technique and instruments advanced from that only with the establishment of the Soviet Union—and their part in the war. There were Chukchis piloting planes, Chukchis commanders leading parachute regiments, and then, with peace, Chukchis operating the most delicate scientific instruments under the frozen ground.

Herein lies the cardinal example of the cultural impact of the Soviet Union. Though few people may know of these particular instances I have given, people do know—somehow it has filtered through—that Soviet achievement has forever destroyed the class myth that there are certain classes that have a monopoly of ability, and certain classes who would only keep coal in the bath if you were to give them one. It has destroyed the myth that there are races of men not as capable of achievement as any other human beings.

This is the supreme step forward in terms of humanism. Let there be no misunderstanding about humanism. Lenin wrote against humanism in the sense that it was a mistake, if one wanted to benefit humanity, to obscure or ignore the reality of the division of humanity into classes, and what he regarded as the necessity for awareness of class conflicts in existing society and the role of the working class in bringing about a future that would see liberation of all mankind. It was in this sense that he spoke against “humanism”. But humanism as the inspiration of those who, throughout centuries, have stood for a belief in man's capacity, without aid outside himself, to reach not only satellites and planets but any goal, to achieve anything—this is progressive.

What is worse than any mistake that can be made in any country over this or that being right in art or literature, or this or that method of coping with it—what is infinitely worse—is the total cutting off from creative opportunity of masses of people based on a distinction of race or class. I find it quite incredible to see the arrays of signatures of personages in letters to *The Times*—persons who

are giants maybe in cultural achievements in their own countries—but who have nothing to say about the hosts of mute inglorious Miltons, mute and inglorious because they have never had a chance to be Miltons, everywhere where there is no socialist society, and who make mountains out of what are incomparably small molehills compared to the injustices and other restrictions still inflicted, in their own type of society, upon the majority of mankind.

The Soviet Union is constantly showing that there can be no barriers to the achievements of man. By removing the suppression of class and race potentials it has made the world that we know different from what the world was fifty years ago. It has made all the oppressors of class and race go on the defensive. It has lit a candle, to use the old historic phrase, that can never be put out and that remains the most brilliant light in our times today.

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In calling upon Mr. Andrew Rothstein to move a vote of thanks to the speaker the Chairman commented that he had been appointed as a young man to the first executive committee of the SCR and had remained a member throughout, having been appointed a Vice-President 11 years ago. He was now the only surviving member of that first committee.

Mr. Rothstein said that he felt sure that, had the lecture Mr. Ivor Montagu had just delivered been given before a learned society, it would have given rise immediately to a lively debate. The account of the early days of the SCR had recalled for him the names of several well-known people who had campaigned for the development of cultural relations with the Soviet Union. He remembered the very first pamphlet by one of these people, Dr. Joseph King, a Quaker Member of Parliament, entitled *The Russian Revolution*, in which he referred to “the peculiarly intense and severe type of intellect” which was common in Russia, and “a quality seen in their scientific and artistic geniuses”. King had called upon the British people to realise that “the Russian Revolution has only just begun : it will last and live”.

Two months later, in May, 1918, Arthur Ransome, who had been a correspondent in Moscow for the *Daily News*, in the later stages of the War and the first stages of the Revolution, wrote a passionate appeal to *The New Republic* in the USA, that was later published under the title of *The Truth about Russia*. In this he said that the people who had made the new Soviet government “have written a page of history more daring than any other which I can remember in the story of the human race. They are writing it amid showers of mud from all the meaner spirits in their country, in yours and in my own”. These words were written at a time when to say a word in favour of cultural relations between the Soviet Union and other countries, or to say even that there was such a thing as culture in the

Soviet Union was to earn violent abuse. In March, 1919, Ransome had returned to Russia and then wrote the first book about it to make a great impact on the British public. It was entitled *Six Weeks in Russia*, and was published in June, 1919. It contained an early echo of what had been mentioned in the lecture "the feeling, from which we could never escape, of the creative effort of the revolution". It described his visit to the Bolshoi Opera for a performance of *Samson and Delilah*. This kind of performance had previously been attended by people who desired merely to have a pleasant opportunity to digest in comfort a good dinner, along with a few poorer people who had managed to save up sufficient money to buy a ticket for the gallery. Ransome had noted that "there had been a great transfer of brains from the gallery to the floor of the house". He gave an account of the vast expansion of education and paid tribute to the Soviet government for what he described as "the resolute way in which it has brought the Russian classics into the bookshops". Perhaps the most moving incident in his story was his talk with the great Russian Darwinian Professor Timiriazev, a foreign member of the Royal Society, half-starved and partly paralysed, living in an unheated flat, but a Bolshevik, carrying on his scientific work and protesting to King about the "veil of lies" about Russia that were being pulled over English eyes. This was of special concern to him as he had an English grandmother and claimed that he had English blood in his veins.

Mr. Rothstein had made his first visit to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1920 when H. G. Wells, the first British writer of major stature to make a visit there, published a book entitled *Russia in the Shadows*, that was received with a storm of abuse and incomprehension because it told something about the enormous efforts that were being made in the face of appalling difficulties there. This visit also led to the establishment of the first direct contacts between British and Soviet scientists.

Soon after this Clare Sheridan, the sculptress, who came from the higher ranks of the British aristocracy, dared the fury of all respectable society here, including that of her cousin Winston Churchill, by going to Moscow to make a bust of Lenin and of other Soviet leaders. She was roundly denounced by *The Times*, which had been printing her articles that she had written under contract. On the day of publication of the last article there appeared a leader outstanding even at that time for its concentrated abuse and venom.

These people had helped to open doors for contact ever so little but they were pioneers and heroes in terms of what they achieved. The SCR has built on their foundations and in moving the vote of thanks to Mr. Montagu for his lecture, Mr. Rothstein felt sure that all those who had listened to it would support it unanimously in the spirit of those early pioneers.



But the heart of man beats on . . . .

*Robert Rozhdestvensky*

Huge are the halls of railway stations !  
From the very newest  
to the most  
ancient and  
                    ridiculous  
                                    crazy ones,  
that encircle and grip you.  
Why are they always enormous?  
And penetrating,  
                    dark,  
                                    fog-formless.  
To enter them—like reading  
novels whose ends are sad,  
                                    bitter and heavy.  
How right this is !  
Here is the home  
                    of partings.  
They wring their hands bereaved,  
sharp echoes all around  
now wailing wild  
now dancing sound.  
Laden with cares and sicknesses  
here live  
                    on these strait platforms  
sitting in state  
on trunks and cases  
partings innumerable, untold. . . .  
Huge are museum halls !  
No husk  
can cling on here,  
the museum  
                    looks loftily down on the world  
and calls us ignorant. . . .  
The long, long hall bears down on us,  
disquieting, summoning to give more thought.  
Here  
our memory abides.  
Here all of our past  
lives on. . . .  
Portraits here line the walls.



The floors  
                   are wide as open plains.  
 Carved mantels. Beds of royalty  
 now cold for many a year. . . .  
 Some rose to favour,  
   some went down and down,  
 some were made safe with ribbons, bright on coat or gown. . . .  
 So much past,  
 overflowing,  
 not staying safe in the past ! . . .  
 Huge are cathedral naves !  
 Free-rising pillars, enigmatic.  
 The peal of bells  
   insistent, sweet,—  
 Avaunt,  
 foul fiend thus shamed ! . . .  
 All that they built—for God,  
   always for God  
 (themselves—just anywhere,  
 they didn't count),  
 this day—for God,  
   the next—for God,  
 high as the sun—for God,  
 How right it is !  
   Here the same laws hold good :  
 here  
 meeting the parish folk in prayers that soothe,  
 here dwells not God  
 but hope.  
 Good reason for cathedrals to be huge :  
   where then, else,  
 could space be found to house in one great breath  
 so long a plea—  
   “Forgive us !”  
 so bitter a cry—  
   “Come, save us !”  
 so great a multitude  
 of hopes?  
 In the cathedrals  
   the candles gutter, dying. . . .  
 But it beats on,  
 the heart of man.  
 And, knowing it has not eternal life,  
 makes haste  
 to draw the circle to its end again.  
 So far my heart still does good service.



evitable uncle Vasya was refusing entrance to the restaurant to various loiterers who were after the gay life while in the restaurant my more fortunate friend was sitting with some Rumanian circus artistes and talking to them in Spanish and Eskimo. But, alone, I remembered how a minute ago we had been downstairs arguing about literature with a local expert and I thought about the courage of a writer.

The writer has to be courageous, I thought, because his life is hard. When he is alone, face to face with a blank sheet of paper, the whole world is against him. Against him are not only the millions of books that have already been written—the mind simply boggles at the thought—but also the notion : why go on writing when it's all been said before. Against him are headaches, all sorts of diffident days, all sorts of people ringing him up or coming to see him, and all kinds of trials and tribulations and tasks which seem important, although at that moment there cannot be anything more important than the task before him. Against him is the sun which makes him long to leave the house, to go off somewhere, to see something, to look for happiness of some kind. And the rain too is against him when his heart is heavy and gloomy and he does not feel like working.

All around him, the whole world is alive, moving, turning, going somewhere. And from the moment of his birth he is a prisoner of this world and has to live with other people at the very moment when he needs to be alone. Because at that moment there must be no one with him—neither his beloved, nor his mother, nor his wife, nor his children; only his characters must be with him, only his word, only the passion to which he has dedicated himself.

When the writer has sat down with the blank sheet of paper, so much masses against him, so intolerably much. Everything calls out to him, forcing itself on his attention, but he has to live a kind of fictional life of his own. People whom no one has ever seen, who nevertheless appear to be alive—he has to think about them as he would about his nearest and dearest. And he sits, looking out of the window into the distances beyond or at the wall, seeing nothing but interminable length of day and pages in front and behind, his failures and setbacks—those which have been and those which will be—and he feels bad and embittered. And no one can help him, because he is alone.

That is the main point : no one will ever help him, will ever take the pen or typewriter, will ever write for him or show him how to write. He must do that himself. And if he can't do it himself, it means that all is lost—he's not a writer. No one cares whether you are sick or well, whether you can do your job, whether you have patience—that highest form of courage. If you have written badly, neither reputation nor honours, nor past successes will save you.

Your reputation will sometimes help you to publish a bad piece of work, your friends will rush to praise it and you'll get money for it—but all the same you'll not be a writer. . . .

You've got to keep going, you've got to have the courage to start everything from the beginning. You've got to have the courage to wait and be patient if your talent suddenly deserts you and you feel revulsion at the mere thought of sitting down at your desk. Sometimes talent deserts you for a long time, but it always returns if you have courage.

The true writer works for ten hours a day. Often there are hold-ups, and then a day will pass, then another, then many more, and yet he cannot abandon his work; he cannot write any more and in a frenzy, almost in tears he feels the days which he has so few of, passing, passing in vain.

At last he puts the last full-stop in. Now he is empty, so empty that it seems to him he will never write another word: "Well, so what?" he may say—"I have done my work, here it is lying on my desk, a bundle of paper with writing all over it. And nothing like this has ever been done before. Never mind that Tolstoy and Chekhov wrote before me, I wrote this myself. This is different. And what if mine is worse, it's pretty good all the same and no one knows yet whether it is worse or not. Let someone else have a go, like I did."

When the work is done, the writer can think like this: he has finished his work and has, therefore, scored a personal success; such a brief joyful day! The more so, because he must soon start on a new piece and now he needs joy. And joy is so brief.

Because he suddenly sees for instance, that spring has gone, that a vast expanse of time has passed over him since the time when, at the beginning of April, at night, black clouds had gathered in the west, and out of this blackness a warm wind had begun to blow, tirelessly, steadily and powerfully and the snow had begun to show signs of melting.

The ice had floated away, the birds had come back, the streams had roared their last, the wisps of green had appeared, and the corn had swollen and ripened—a whole age had passed, but he had been unconscious of it and had seen nothing. What a lot had taken place in this world during this time, what a lot had happened to people, while he had done nothing but work, nothing but put blank sheets of paper in front of him, one after the other, knowing only one world, that of his heroes. No one could give him this time back; for him it had passed for ever.

Then the writer gives his work to a journal. Let's be optimistic and assume that his work is accepted immediately, with pleasure. They ring the writer up or send him a telegram. They congratulate him. They boast about his work to other journals. The writer visits

the editors, coming and going with gay abandon. Everyone is pleased to see him, and he is pleased too, everyone is so nice. "My dear fellow!"—they say to him. "We'll take it- We'll take it! We'll put it in number twelve!" But number twelve comes out in December. In winter. But at the moment it's summer. . . .

And everyone looks at the writer jovially, smiles, shakes his hand, claps him on the shoulder. Everyone is somehow convinced that the writer has five hundred years of life in front of him. And that for him a wait of half a year is the same as a wait of six days.

A peculiar, burdensome time begins for the writer.

He wills the time past. If only summer were over more quickly. As for autumn, to hell with autumn! December—that's what he wants. The writer pines waiting for December.

But then he starts working again and again things sometimes go well, and sometimes they go badly. A year has passed, the wheel has turned several times over, and April is here again, and the critics have gone into action—paying him back for his old work.

Writers do read criticism of their work. It is not true that some writers are not interested in what is written about them. And this is when the writer needs all his courage. So as not to be offended by being taken to task, by unfairness. So as not to become embittered. So as not to throw up his work, when he gets a real panning. And so as not to be taken in by praise, if it is given. Praise is terrible; it causes the writer to think himself better than he actually is. Then he begins to teach other people instead of teaching himself. No matter how well he may write his next piece he can always do better, he only needs to have courage and learn. But the most terrible thing is not a matter of being praised or being taken to task. The most terrible thing is when they say nothing about you. When your books come out and you know that they are real books, but the critics do not give them a mention—that's when you've got to be strong!

Literary truth always proceeds from the truth about life and the Soviet writer must add to his own writer's courage the courage of pilots, sailors, workers—those people who change life on earth through the sweat of their brow, those people about whom he writes. He writes, whenever possible, about everyone and anyone and he must meet them all himself and share their life. For a time he must become like them, a geologist, a woodcutter, a worker, a hunter, a tractor driver. And the writer must sit on the lower deck of a trawler with seamen, or go with an expedition across the taiga, or fly with pilots of the polar fleet, or escort ships on the Northern Sea Route.

The Soviet writer must remember too that evil exists on the earth, that physical destruction, deprivation of elementary freedoms, violence, humiliation, hunger, fanaticism and crass stupidity,

wars and fascism exist. He must, as far as he can, protest against all this, and his voice, raised against falsehood, hypocrisy and crime, is courage of a special kind.

Finally, the writer must become a soldier, if need be, he must have enough courage for that too, so that afterwards, if he remains alive, he can sit down at his desk again and find himself face to face with a blank sheet of paper again.

The writer's courage must be of the first order. It must be with him constantly, because what he does, he does not for a day, nor for two days, but for the rest of his life. And he knows that each time he will start right from the beginning and it will be even more difficult.

If the writer does not have sufficient courage—he is finished. He is finished even if he has talent. He becomes envious, he begins to vilify his fellow-writers. His blood running cold with spite, he will think about how they did not mention him in some place or other, how they did not give him a prize, but gave it instead to a careerist, a talentless hack. And then he will never know the real happiness of a writer. And a writer can be happy.

Nevertheless, there are moments in his work when everything goes his way, when something that would not work yesterday, works today without any effort. When the typewriter rattles like a machine-gun and blank sheets of paper are fed into it one after the other like cartridge clips. When the work is easy and carefree, when the writer feels himself powerful and honourable.

When he suddenly remembers, after writing a particularly forceful page, that in the beginning there was the Word and the Word was God! This rarely happens even with geniuses, but it only ever happens with courageous writers, a reward for all their hours of labour, for their disappointments, for their despair—it is a sudden apotheosis of the Word. And, after writing this page, the writer knows that it will survive. Other things will not survive, but this page will.

When he realises that he must write the truth, that only in the truth does salvation lie. Only you must not think that your version of the truth will be accepted straight away and without question. But all the same you must write, thinking about the countless people unknown to you for whom, after all, you are writing. For you write not for the editor, nor for the critic, nor for money, although you, like everyone else, need money; in the final analysis it is not for them that you write. You can earn money in any way you like and it does not have to be through writing. But you write, keeping the truth and the apotheosis of the Word in mind. You write and think that literature is the self-awareness of mankind, the self-expression of mankind in your person. You must always re-

member this and be happy and proud that such an honour has fallen to your lot.

When you suddenly look at your watch and see that it is already two or three o'clock, that night had fallen upon the whole earth, and that in its huge expanses people are sleeping or making love and not wanting to know anything apart from their love, or killing one another, and planes are flying with bombs, and somewhere people are dancing, and the announcers on every conceivable radio station are using electric energy to lie, to console, to alarm, to cheer, to disappoint and to give hope. And you, so weak and solitary at that hour, are not asleep and are thinking about the whole world, you desperately want everyone on earth to become happy and free at last, you want inequality, wars, racialism and poverty to vanish, you want labour to become as essential to everyone as the air they breathe.

But the most important happiness lies in the fact that you are not alone in your late vigil. Together with you, other writers, your brothers in the Word, are not sleeping. And all of you desire one thing—for the world to become better, and for man to become more human.

You have not the power to rebuild the world as you want; no individual has. But you have your truth and your Word. And you must have threefold courage, so that in spite of all your misfortunes, failures and setbacks you can nevertheless bring joy and happiness to people and never stop saying that life will become better.

## Summer visit to USSR

*Dr. I. M. Brown*

*Dr. I. M. Brown, consultant geriatrician, Eastbourne, Sussex, organised a visit by a group of British gerontologists to Kiev in July 1972. He tells of his brief impressions.*

The TU 104 roared into the air from Gatwick airport. It was on a charter flight taking the British party to a world conference on the study of old age and its problems. Few, if any, of the gerontologists had visited the USSR before, and a number had arranged for wives and children to accompany them and so share their first impressions. There was an atmosphere of eager anticipation as the plane gained height, and headed eastwards.

The wives and families were flying to a sightseeing holiday; the gerontologists were going primarily to the IX International Congress of the International Association of Gerontology which was to be held at Kiev.

### **The association**

The International Association of Gerontology was formed in 1950. As its name implies it is representative of all those concerned with the process and problems of aging. Gerontology is an increasingly important science because as standards of living rise so the expectation of life lengthens. This means that the proportion of people of pensionable age within a society rises. The study of aging is primarily of interest to scientists in the fields of clinical medicine, psychology, biology, and sociology. In a wider sphere it is, of course, also the concern of such people as economists.

The International Association of Gerontology convenes a congress of an international scale every three years. As yet it has no permanent secretariat and so the mounting and organisation of the conference is the responsibility of the host country and the president-elect. For obvious reasons the president-elect is always a national of the host country.

### **Kiev - the congress venue**

The USSR as hosts chose Kiev, capital of the Ukrainian SSR, as the conference venue. One of the reasons for this was undoubtedly that research on gerontology in the USSR is centred there under Professor D. F. Chebotarev, the association's president-elect until the start of the congress when he became president.

Professor Chebotarev has been head of the Institute of Gerontology of the USSR at Kiev since 1961. This research institute was constituted as such in 1958 but for many years before that scientists of the Ukraine had been particularly interested in problems concerned with aging. In 1936, for example, an extensive scientific expedition was undertaken to the mountainous region of Abkhazia, where the population is remarkable for its longevity.

The opening of the congress was held on Sunday, July 2, in the Ukraina Palace which is a magnificent new theatre building. It easily accommodated the 3,000-odd delegates, and the wives and children who probably accounted for a further 1,500. The speeches of welcome, followed by talks on Gerontology—Past, Present and Future by N. Shock (USA) and Gerontology and Modern Medicine by D. F. Chebotarev (USSR) were listened to with great respect. Then followed a specially mounted concert to celebrate the opening of the congress.



## The opening concert

The first item was *A Song of Welcome*, music by Ardievsky and words by Dorichenko. The traditional Ukrainian folk song called *Roars and Moans Dnieper, the Wide*, which came next, reminded the visitors of Kiev's position on the great Dnieper river. Other items included excerpts from opera and ballet, piano solos, further folk songs and traditional dances. Two songs, one called the *Song of the Motherland*, and the other *Son the Ducks are Flying*, were performed by bandore players. Other performers included the State Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine SSR, soloists from the Shevchenko State Opera and Ballet Theatre, and the amateur dance company *Kritka*. The evening was a most enjoyable experience for the vast audience, giving them a delightful first impression.

## The congress at work

The next morning the congress proper opened at the October Palace of Culture with a series of papers on Modern Ideas on the Essence of Aging. All the working sessions were held in this impressive building which dated from before the revolution. Indeed it had been originally the Institute for the Daughters of the Nobility. After the opening plenary session delegates dispersed into smaller groups to hold parallel meetings. This pattern of full congress to start each day followed by study groups for the rest of the morning and afternoon was repeated throughout the conference. It meant, of course, that each delegate could concentrate the majority of his time on topics of especial interest to him. The programme was very tightly scheduled, with speakers allocated only 15 minutes for the presentation of their papers. Inevitably this led to some difficulty in translation when speakers rushed their talks in order to keep within the time limit, and so outstripped the interpreters.

It was apparent from the papers that the size of the problem confronting those concerned with the medical and social welfare of old people differed from country to country. A delegate from Yugoslavia, for instance, gave the average expectancy of life in his country as 62.3 years for men, and 65.8 years for women, with 8.3% of the population over 60. In England and Wales 12½% of the population is of pensionable age and in certain south coast resorts the figure is as high as 30%. This is because of the migration of retired people to the seaside towns of south-east England. One of the papers presented by a British delegate highlighted the consequent problems and was entitled "Social and Medical Problems caused by large-scale movement of elderly folk to UK south-coast resorts". His epithet—the Costa Geriatrica—to describe the area was appreciated by the Spanish and French delegates.

## Language problems

An entirely different problem faces those concerned with the elderly in Israel. It is that the vast majority (96%) of their old people are immigrants. They have come from 80 countries, among them the United Kingdom and the USSR. One of the greatest difficulties is in communication because 60% of those now aged 75 and over did not leave their country of origin until they were over 60 years of age. Naturally many have been unable to learn the language of their new home.

Language, too, proved a difficulty when delegates to the congress, themselves from 41 different countries, visited homes for pensioners and the aged in, or near, Kiev. They were unable to chat informally to those living in the homes, and regretted this as they felt that to the old people they were welcome visitors.

## Centenarians in Russia

The longevity of people in certain parts of Russia was mentioned by a number of speakers. It was claimed that one man was 167 years old, which means that he was a child at the time of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. Nor does it seem that this man was a unique case, as a number of instances were cited of people of both sexes living well into their 140s and 150s. There seemed no doubt that centenarians in Russia only thrive in rural areas, but longevity does occur both in mountainous and steppe regions. Research in one area produced a survey of mountain dwellers. 2,000 people were noted as being over 100 years old.

As yet there does not seem to be any scientifically acceptable reason as to why people have a longer expectancy of life in these notable areas in the USSR. The clean air of mountains or steppes may make a contribution, so too may the food of the regions. Even more specifically a rare herb was mentioned as having uncommon vitamin properties. The opinion was voiced that this might be a contributory factor, but as yet nothing has been proved.

The variety and complexity of many of the papers given made it impossible for delegates to form an adequate impression of all the contributions. However, the organisers of the congress provided everyone with a book of abstracts. This enabled all who attended to read the outlines of the papers presented. This was just one example of the way in which the congress had been thoughtfully organised. In general, all those from the United Kingdom were impressed by the obvious enthusiasm of the participants at the congress, the majority of whom were, quite naturally, from the USSR. They listened with interest to the papers from the USSR, where it seems that there is an increasing awareness of the need to provide for the elderly.

During the course of the conference it was made possible for some delegates to visit the Institute of Gerontology at Kiev. As the centre of gerontology research in the USSR, the visitors naturally found it of great interest, and noted the wide diversity of the various aspects of gerontology which were being studied there.

## December 1922

*Marthe Brown*

Fifty years ago, on December 30th, 1922, formal approval was given to the formation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The event was not especially dramatic as the formal approval came at the end of a long process of debate during which there were wide ranging examinations of the need for the step and agreements made in the form of recommendations that it should be taken. The story of this debate is told in the cold prose of the historian in Chapter 13 of the first volume of E. H. Carr's *A History of Soviet Russia*. Although this was written in the late 1940's little fresh evidence has come to light to add significantly to the detail of the account given there. Nevertheless some fresh interpretations of the evidence have been made.

The long debate that led up to the decision was to become characteristic for subsequent major changes in policy and law in this new society. The presence of crudities and ambiguities of expression in the formulation of the decision, that have been so strongly criticised by lawyers and historians in the west, is itself evidence of the involvement of many hands and minds in the drafting. Carr alludes to this twice over in the course of the chapter mentioned above. He traces the first employment of the idea of union to Stalin's comment in 1919 on the proposals that had been made by the various republics for a military alliance. The comment was to the effect that "through the independent Soviet republics the peoples of Russia are coming to a new voluntary brotherly unity". Carr points out in the footnote to this that "This is apparently the first use in this context of the word *soyuz* which does duty in Russian for both 'alliance' and 'union'. The confusion of terminology is significant of a lack of precision in Russian constitutional thought, and helped in this case to bridge the transition from one status to another." He later points out in the body of the text

that the treaties that were concluded between the republics in 1922 "had some features of an alliance, some of a federation and some of a unitary state. But this vagueness was characteristic of all Soviet constitutional documents of the period."

The reader might conclude from this double thrust with emphasis on "vagueness" and "confusion" that Carr is merely echoing the standard denunciation of Soviet constitutional law made by western critics. The theme of the chapter however is a refutation of this standard denunciation. It ends on the note that 'Soviet experience confirms the conclusion of a recent general treatise on federal government: 'War and economic crisis, if they recur frequently, will almost certainly turn federal governments into unitary governments . . . The growth of social services may, but need not, tend towards the same end.''' In this sense vagueness and confusion are desirable features of constitutional law because they enable a régime to change and develop over the course of time. Furthermore, as Carr shows in the body of the chapter, vagueness and confusion were the inevitable products of the long debate in which representatives of the republic involved tried to reach agreement about forms of co-operation between peoples who were at widely different stages of social development, disparate in almost every respect, but having in common only the conviction that socialist solutions were needed for their desperate economic problems. The destruction wrought by the war, intervention by foreign armies, civil war, blockade and famine were together making it increasingly obvious that a combination of efforts was necessary to ensure survival and to effect economic recovery.

How was this combination best to be achieved? It is here perhaps that the discussion of alliance, federation, union and unification is relevant. Carr tries to avoid one terminological confusion that arose in the very title of the Russian republic. This is usually called in English translation the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, and the term federative has been replaced in Carr by federal. Federative is, as the dictionary tells us, pertaining to federation. It might help to clarify political relationships if the terminology is given greater precision. The Soviet texts dealing with the history of the period regularly use terms like confederation, federation, federal, federative, and union, as though they were synonymous. Even the order of the adjectives soviet and socialist in the title of the RSFSR varies from time to time and sometimes in the very same text as though it did not much matter which came first.

The RSFSR was not a union of states but a federation created on the basis of autonomy. It was not a unification of Soviet national republics but was a republic itself within which existed both autonomous republics and autonomous regions, some of which had not previously had a separate political identity. The non-Russian ele-

ments, though they occupied about half the territory of the RSFSR, made up only 17 out of the 117 million population. There were therefore arguments among Soviet constitutional lawyers whether states like the RSFSR are federations or unitary states. Some rather evasively argue that they 'contain elements of internal *federirovaniya*'. It is perhaps in this sense that the word federative should be retained in the RSFSR. In the Georgian constitution of 1927 it is said that the new state has been constructed on the basis of a federation of national soviet republics and although it contains autonomous regions it is called the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. There are three other republics in the same category.

When the Ukrainian, White Russian and Trans-Caucasian republics were brought together with the RSFSR in 1922 the question of autonomy immediately arose. It was sometimes expressed in terms of cultural-national autonomy, regional autonomy, Soviet autonomy, administrative autonomy and political autonomy. The emphasis placed on autonomy would have led one to expect the resulting alliance to be called a confederation or federation. In fact it was called a union—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The earlier use of the terms confederation and federation in bourgeois constitutions, particularly those in the old British empire territories of America and Australia, had given them a peculiar meaning. American constitutionalists criticised the Soviet system as pseudo-federal because it lacked the elaborate legal guarantees of independence of the constituent units. Soviet constitutionalists, on the other hand, replied that the American system was more deserving of being called pseudo-federal because the units needed special legal protection in the absence of any genuine national-cultural autonomy. The American Union could have become a Union in the Soviet sense if it had been a Union of republics each of which was British, French, Red Indian, Spanish, Negro and, one might have added earlier on, Russian.

In America and Australia the dominant national culture rapidly obliterated the weaker ones, by fragmenting and absorbing them. A Jewish national republic in America was never seriously considered because it made no more sense than a Red Indian or Negro republic did. It did make sense in the Soviet Union along with the many national cultures that were never obliterated to anything like the same degree by the dominant Great Russian chauvinism. It has often been said that our understanding of Russia has been poor, relative to our understanding of America, because we lack writing about it of the quality of that in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. He was able to explain almost everything in America, that so puzzled the early Victorian Englishman, in terms of what he called the dominant Anglo American manners. The outstanding feature of these was the passion for equality, which was peculiar to

the British settlers in America. The passions that characterised the revolutionary movement in Russia and the republics that were formed out of the old Russian Empire after the revolution were never patently associated with the Great Russian culture alone. Socialist passions were internationalist and every nation and culture could claim them for their own.

This did not mean however that a union of different republics based on a common set of values shared by different national cultures was necessarily more or less cohesive than one with a dominant national culture. The founding fathers of the American republic expressed their aim as being towards a more perfect union but the leaders of the colonies coming together to form it demanded strict legal guarantees of their autonomy as the price of joining. In the case of the Soviet Union, the republics were *de facto* autonomous in terms of their national culture and needed therefore fewer *de jure* guarantees.

In practice the national cultures have been in no way weakened by the absence of elaborate legal protection in the constitution. Carr quotes the speech by Rakovsky, president of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom and principal Ukrainian delegate to the eighth All Russian Congress of Soviets that was held in Moscow on December, 28th, 1920, when a formal treaty was signed between the Ukrainian and Russian Republics. He said : "There is no doubt whatever that our future policy will go along the path of unification, and especially now, in the period of Soviet economic construction, this integration and unification are just as indispensable as earlier in the period of military defence, perhaps even more indispensable." It is true that the treaty provided in the preamble for "the right of nations to self-determination proclaimed by the great proletarian revolution", as well as the "independence and sovereignty of each of the contracting parties". The critics who dismissed the latter as meaningless and foretold that the emphasis on unification meant that the Ukrainian national culture was doomed to extinction were doubly wrong. In the 1950's a delegation of young Canadians, most of whom were third generation Canadians born of Ukrainian settlers, visited the Ukraine. As their train from Moscow pulled into Kiev station they were struggling to burst open the door to be the first to throw themselves flat on the platform to kiss their native Ukrainian soil. These were citizens of a federal union that provided strong, formal, legal safeguards for national cultural minorities. Even the strongest of these, the French Canadians, have found survival difficult and the constitution has failed completely to protect the autonomy of the others.

There was in the earliest discussion of the need for federation after the revolution very little attention to emphasis on the protection of the national cultures. Lenin pointed out in 1920 the need

to work for 'a closer federative union in view, first, of the impossibility of defending the existence of Soviet republics surrounded by incomparably more powerful military forces of the imperialist powers of the whole world without a closer union of the Soviet republics; and, second, the need for a close economic union of the Soviet republics without which it was impossible to realise the restoration of the means of production ruined by imperialism and to provide for the wellbeing of the toiling masses; and, third, of the trend towards the establishment of a single world economy regulated by the proletariat of every nation in accordance with a common plan, a trend that had clearly been brought into being under capitalism and which must be further developed and fully achieved under socialism."

One of the earliest and most substantial forms of unification of the republics was the famous GOELRO (Lenin's electrification network) which opened the way for removal in 1921-22 of all tariffs on trade between the republics. The introduction of the New Economic Policy made it possible for all the republics to complete the main nationalisation of the means of production. By the start of the second half of 1922, the time appeared to be ripe for the formation of a union of all the republics.

Lenin was then seriously ill and out of action at Gorki. He had declined to advise on the form that such a union should take and said that it must be left to the republics themselves to devise. The initial proposals were for a loose confederation, without a central government, or for a temporary alliance to deal with the most urgent problems. Other suggestions were made for a formal alliance into which each separate republic, including those that made up the Russian and Trans-Caucasian republics, should be allowed to enter directly. The latter proposals came mainly from spokesmen from Georgia, Bashkiria and the Tatar republic. Officials of the Russian republic proposed that the Ukrainian, White Russian and Trans-Caucasian republics should be allowed to join the Russian republic with the same rights as those enjoyed by the existing autonomous republics.

In August, 1922, the Central Committee of the Communist Party set up a special commission to formulate a plan for the co-operation of the independent republics. This was drafted by Stalin. Although the commission contained representatives of the republics it came out with a proposal, which it characterised as "autonomisation", for allowing the republics to join the Russian republic. It was circulated by the central committees of the party in each of the independent republics. The project was accepted only by the Azerbaijan, Armenian and Trans-Caucasian committees. Nevertheless the commission adopted it at the end of September. At this time Lenin wrote a note to the members of the Politburo of the central com-

mittee attacking the project and the idea of "autonomisation". He demanded the formation of a new state in the form of a federation of independent republics. The demand was accepted and the commission prepared a new project which was then widely discussed through the months of October and November up to the end of December. At the end of November the central committee circulated a short statement of the basic points about the proposed constitution of the Soviet Union which were examined during December by congresses of Soviets throughout the republics.

The 10th All Russian Congress of Soviets held on 23rd to 29th December, 1922, was also attended by delegates elected from congresses of soviets of the other republics, and on December 30th this met as the 1st All Union Congress of Soviets. It adopted a Declaration and Treaty for the formation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. Lenin wrote a letter the following day on "The question of nationalities or about 'autonomisation'", in which he attacked the idea of "autonomisation" which he coupled with chauvinism, and demanded the strictest observance of independence and equality of republics, with special concern for those nations that had been held in subjection. After a further year of discussion within the republics the Constitution of the Soviet Union was finally adopted early in 1924.



# BOOK REVIEWS

**Bol'shoi Anglo-Russkii Slovar'** (New English-Russian Dictionary) edited by I.R. Gal'perin, Moscow 1972, distributed in Britain by Collet's Holdings, 2 vols., 822 and 863 pages, £7·80.

This very large new dictionary contains about 150,000 entries, about twice as many as the *Oxford Russian-English Dictionary*, about three times as many as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. The aim is to provide a reference work giving a detailed description of current English vocabulary and it is hoped that the work will be of use not only to Russians, but to English and Americans learning Russian. A 12,000-word introduction deals with the methods used in compiling the dictionary; this includes an interesting Venn diagram (a term not represented in the dictionary) of English vocabulary. The concern to give an adequate reflection of grammatical aspects of current English, and especially to try to convey the present dynamics of change in current English, leads to the use of a fair number of symbols. This, together with the layout of the pages in three columns and the use of a somewhat small size of, though clear, type, makes the use of the dictionary somewhat less pleasant than it might have been. Moreover, despite the interesting preface, it is a little difficult to understand fully on what basis the word selection was made. To an Englishman in the strict sense, not a Scot or an American, many of the words are likely to be totally unknown.

Although there is a list indicating the main sources used, there is no indication of the method of establishing word frequencies, even though, apparently, this has been used as a criterion for certain purposes. It also seems a little odd that, despite the deep concern for the dynamics of present-day English, Fowler's *Modern English Usage* is not included in the list of works consulted. The overall impression obtained from dipping into the dictionary, in fact, is that the praiseworthy attempt to reflect the current dynamic situation of English is inadequate; this is probably due to a certain lack of live experience of the language on a scale which would be necessary to do this effectively.

Entries include a phonetic transcript of the English word, grammatical information, translation into Russian and numerous examples of usage. The basic system adopted is to try to give a precise Russian equivalent wherever possible, supplementing this by description or by transliteration, or by a combination of both the latter forms. Apart from the main section of the dictionary, there are a number of appendices : of personal and geographic names, a rather

curious list of abbreviations, monetary units of the countries of the world and tables of weights and measures. The dictionary is thus likely to be of considerable use to Russians wishing to translate from English into Russian. Its usefulness, however, for English students of Russian seems likely to be less. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how one's culture is reflected in a dictionary such as this.

First, however, it should be pointed out that the word order adopted for entries is not that which would normally be found in a English dictionary. In fact, the first rule of filing, that nothing precedes something, has not been observed. We therefore find, for example, "Beat Generation" located after "beater" and before "beatific, beatifical". Similarly, "light heavy-weight" is located after "light-heartedly" and before "light-heeled"; "star lightning" occurs after "starlight" and before "star-like". There are numerous other similar examples.

While the overall coverage is good, there are a number of omissions and the degree of differentiation between certain common English words is not as great as one might have wished. Given the approach outlined in the preface, one might have expected, for example, "chop" and "cutlet" to be distinguished; "program" is merely regarded as a variant of spelling of "programme", its use in the sphere of computers is not mentioned. "Semi-detached" is represented, but not "semi" alone in this sense. "High-rise", however, is not included. The English pub and our diet of fish and chips is represented, but the English student may be surprised to learn that "French-fried (potatoes)" is only American usage; "scampi" does not appear. Other omissions include "contract-rate", "credit-card", "deck" (in the sense of tape or record deck), "flip-side". "Call-girl" is included, though badly defined, but "model" in the similar sense is not included. "Comrade Smith", apparently, is standard English usage. "Bluebottle" is given as a colloquial form for "policeman", but "fuzz" as thieves' cant for "detective". Moscow appears to be in the same situation as Oxford as regards colloquial terms for the sexual organs, and somewhat more reticent in providing equivalents rather than descriptions.

Overall, then, this dictionary marks a notable advance on previous Russian compilations of this type. Nevertheless, it still leaves a lot to be desired and seems to indicate the need for a much closer acquaintanceship with the English language as it is used in real life. In fact, I end by wondering whether both the Oxford Dictionary and this two-volume dictionary from Moscow might not have benefited from a co-operative effort between the institutions concerned.

R. E. F. SMITH,  
*University of Birmingham.*

**Forbidden Fruit and Other Stories.** By Fazil Iskander. *Moscow: Progress Publishers.* 1972. Pp. 224. Illustrated.

Nestled on the western slopes of the Caucasus, with austere snow-clad peaks in the east and a lush coastline in the west, lies one of the smallest and prettiest countries in the world—Abkhazia. Its people number less than half a million. Before 1917 scarcely 10 per cent were literate but their verbal traditions go back deep into history: indeed—pre-history. Abkhazia was the goal of the legendary argonauts, the land of the golden fleece, the Greek colony of Colchis, occupied later by Romans, Persians, Turks and Russians. It is now an autonomous republic within the territory of Georgia and has about a dozen competent writers using Abkhazian, Georgian, Armenian or the Russian languages. At least two, both writing in Russian, have gained a reputation and popularity throughout the Soviet Union and have also been translated into many foreign languages. One is Georgii Gulia, a man of colourful personality and many-sided talents, who was a guest of our Society a few years ago; the other, a younger man, Fazil Iskander, we hope also to see soon in London. Iskander is a remarkable raconteur, a lover of tall stories and a humorist of great originality and irreverent wit. The present book of nine longish short stories is the first to appear in English.

The translation is by Robert Daglish and readers of our Moscow diary will know the standard of writing to expect from his pen. They will not be disappointed. The text sparkles and gleams. While much of Iskander's humour is as universal as, say, Mark Twain's, with which it has distinct affinity, some of the additional charm to a Russian reader would be in the savour of local exoticism, the refractory tang of Caucasian, and even, perhaps, more narrowly Abkhazian, phrasing. English, and good English at that, can be a stealthy, unforgiving leveller, and no one is likely to be more aware of this and still remain largely helpless before it than Daglish. He does all that can be done. The loss is slight. It varies with the subject matter and is minimal in the more cosmopolitan stories, such as the last one. But all are thoroughly enjoyable and are bound to win new admirers for author and translator.

L. CROME.

**The White Steamship**, by Chingiz Aitmatov, *translated by Tatyana and George Feifer, Hodder and Stoughton, £1-95.*

Anyone who has read Chingiz Aitmatov's *Farewell Gulsary* will welcome the appearance, in English, of his latest novella *The White Steamship*, another poignant tale of life in the high moun-

tains of Kirghizia, a life that but a few generations ago was half nomadic, half-feudal, and yet in Aitmatov's narrative becomes so real to us that we relive it as if it were our own.

As always with Aitmatov the tale is very basic, but for all its apparent simplicity it manages to have wide implications.

A little boy, abandoned by his parents, grows up with his aunt and uncle in a little compound on the edge of a great area of preserved forest in the mountains. His aunt is childless and her unfor-giving husband, Oruzkul, instead of caring for the boy, has fallen into a bitter and savage despair, from which the only relief is drinking and beating his wife, and the exercise of petty tyranny over all who come within his power as forest warden of the district.

The chief victim of this tyranny is the old grandfather, Momun, who despite his age must do everything from floating logs in the icy river to driving the maral, the red deer of Central Asia, whose life he believes by ancient tradition to be sacred. Though constantly ordered about and never given the respect due to his years, "Nippy" Momun carries in his heart the poetry and beliefs of his forefathers and these he passes on to the little boy, particularly the legend of Antlered Deer-Mother that is symbolic of the fertility of his race. (Incidentally in the latest hardback collection of his work Aitmatov has given this novella the new title of *After the Fairy-Tale*).

The boy is so lonely that he talks to everything, and everything—rocks, trees, even the school briefcase bought for him by his grandfather—talks to him. But his imagination soars most freely when he climbs the mountain, leaving the compound behind, and spies through an old pair of binoculars the white steamship that from time to time crosses distant Lake Issyk.

In a sense the boy is the repository of all the poetry and kindness of his people. Through his eyes we see the senselessness of his uncle's cruelty and besottedness and the endless bickering between the grandmother and her childless daughter-in-law. The only kindness the boy receives is from the old man, who even builds a little pond for the boy to swim in, so that he shall not be carried away by the mountain torrent, and this pond, like the deer, becomes symbolic of the old man's unconscious desire to preserve life and the spirit of kindness. But in the end Momun, never a strong character, is beaten and forced by his taskmaster to kill the sacred Deer-Mother, and the little boy, horrified by the spectacle of Oruzkul and his cronies gorging themselves on the carcass and hacking the valuable antlers out of its head, swims away with the torrent towards the unattainable white steamship of his dreams.

Simple in outline, the story has great depth. At one level it is the tragedy of gentle sensitivity defeated in an unequal struggle with callous corruption. On another one feels the social implica-

tions, the isolation, the harshness of attitudes. On yet another it is the eternal conflict between man and his environment. Oruzkul's impotent rage over an accident of nature turns him into a tyrant and his tyranny is the expression of a weakness that spreads and poisons everything around him. It is on this level that the story makes its strongest plea for the new life that has not yet reached the compound or reached it in only a weak and corrupted form.

Those who are interested in literary politics will find food for thought in the afterword appended by the translators. They attempt to grapple with the problem of why Aitmatov is a "consensus author" and "most pivotal figure" in Soviet literature, praised by critics of every trend, while Solzhenitsyn is shunned and suppressed. This is perhaps understandable in view of the tremendous interest in Solzhenitsyn created by the ban on publication of his work in the USSR, though they are wrong in assuming that apart from Aitmatov there is nothing but "a general mumble" from other Soviet writers in the current situation. Instead of comparing the work of the two writers, however, they confine themselves mainly to an account of what they regard as Aitmatov's tactics in accommodating his work to Socialist Realism in which "reducing the doctrine to its simplest terms, literature is meant to encourage the Soviet people to follow the Party's leadership in building communism". The trouble is that when reduced to such terms, literary theory has very little meaning for literature.

What the translators have done, however, is to record for us many extracts from Aitmatov's own speeches and much information about what is said for and against him that does help us to understand his position. This suggests that the bounds of literary freedom in the USSR are wider than the Sunday newspapers would have us believe. But with Aitmatov, one feels, it is not really a matter of literary "dos and don'ts", but of seeking a new approach that can do justice to the new life around him.

"These days I am like a pilot," he has written recently, "who has temporarily lost his bearing while landing in an unfamiliar place. I am groping my way through clouds . . . towards the ground and towards life; I circle over them in thought, trying to make sense of the human affairs, actions and fate which comprise the kernel of historic events and daily happenings, trying to . . . concentrate and fix my attention on what is most important . . . that is, on people's characters and life situations which would enable me to say something new and significant about our time and our life."

All this has been tactfully left to the afterword and the story is allowed to speak powerfully for itself. It is a pity, however, that the translation is not more skilful. The translators have obviously set out to convey as much of Aitmatov's originality as they could, but they have been abysmally careless in doing so and we are left with

such sentences as, "Dread and anxiety so welled up in the boy that his food wouldn't go down. There is nothing worse than people keeping silent during a meal, while they concentrated on their own evil thoughts and schemed something harmful." (p. 100).

Nicknames can, of course, be very difficult to render, but surely it is odd to hear the author calling the old man "Efficacious Momun" and an "odd ball" almost in one breath, even granted the American idiom of the translators. The Russian "rastoropny" has to be rendered "nippy" or perhaps 'slippy" to make sense of the boy's reflection that he would have to explain to his father that there was nothing bad in the nickname. Nor is "little tyke" or "shaver" a satisfactory equivalent of the Russian "malchishka". The dialogue is also uneven. Someone asks "Have the young chaps in this village all gone extinct?". Someone else uses the exclamation "Zounds!". Aitmatov is undoubtedly original in his images and thoughts, but not in using a hotchpotch of language. But though little justice is done to his fine literary style, much of the strength of his writing does come across.

R.D.

**On the Run** by Mikhail Bulgakov. *Translated by Avril Pyman.* Ginn & Co. Ltd., London 1972. 60p.

To any acting group with an interest in things Russian and the initiative and facilities to tackle a play with a historical background unfortunately rather unfamiliar to most English audiences, with eight different scenes, and with a cast of four good male parts, only two (unfortunately) good female parts, some sixteen or so smaller male parts, four small female parts and numerous extras, this translation is highly recommended.

This publication is an "acting edition" in the best sense; that is, the only stage directions are the author's (none of the "he crosses DL and sits" stuff) there is an excellent introduction including Historical Notes, notes on the play itself, the author's life and other works, and even a bibliography, all of which would prove very useful to a director in his background research. There are also some helpful, if rather elementary, notes for the Stage Manager. A further good point is that the proper names in the list of characters are, with one exception, provided with stress marks. English actors cannot be expected to acquire correct pronunciation of proper names, but it is the least one can expect that all the actors pronounce a name the same way. The one exception, curiously, is that of the leading character, Roman Valyeryanovich Khludov, whose name is underlined, but not stress-marked.

The play itself is presented in eight "Dreams", a conception that suggests to the décor designer that imagination and good lighting

effects are more important than strict realism. It is crammed with action, ranging from stark tragedy to delicious, almost farcical comedy. It traces the decline and fall of the central character, a fictitious General Khludov, commander of the White Russian forces on the Crimean front during the Civil War in 1920, and the action shifts about between the Crimea, Constantinople and Paris.

The "Macbethian" quality of the play is emphasised by the haunting of Khludov throughout by the ghost of Krapilin, a rebellious orderly whose hanging Khludov orders in an early scene. Perhaps the comedy high-spot is the riotous (in every sense) scene in which Charnota, the Cossack general in exile, selling toy devils in the streets of Constantinople, loses all his money on the cockroach races. But Charnota comes into his own in a later comedy scene when he wins a fortune at cards from the wealthy emigré, Kor-zukhin, who has deserted his wife and is living in luxury in Paris.

Most of the male characters are skilfully drawn, even minor ones, and present excellent acting opportunities. Unfortunately the female characters are not given the same subtlety and seem comparatively lightly sketched. The dialogue is taut and economical and the translation reads as good, "speakable" English, needing perhaps some adjustment here and there to suit a particular actor's interpretation.

As the translator points out, Bulgakov is primarily a satirist and this play, though full of social comment, is satire with a human face. It makes enjoyable reading and would certainly give still more enjoyment well presented on the stage.

P. J. ALLEN.

**Fizicheskaya kul'tura i svobodnoe vremya trudyashchikhsya i uchashcheisya molodyozhi.** Zholdak, V.I., ed. *Moscow, Vsesoyozny Nauchnoissledovatel'skiy institut fizicheskoi kul'tury*, 1972. 70 pp. 600 copies.

Of the preface and 8 research articles, none are longer than 10 pages; so the information is necessarily pithy. The general theme is the problem of using free time rationally and the part played by recreational pursuits in free time expenditure. More specifically, three contributions are concerned with the general distribution of free time among different groups of working people; three—with students and physical recreation; one—with the history of Soviet time-budget expenditure with particular reference to "physical culture"; and the last—with the time women devote to physical culture and sport. Prof. V. Artemov, in his article "Time Budget Studies—An Important Problem in Scientifically Improving the Sports Movement", provides statistics on time spent on physical recreation at different periods in Soviet history: in 1923, working men spent 30 minutes per week (1.4% of their free time) on



physical recreation, women—no time at all. In 1929, time spent on recreation was 1.5 hours per week for men, 15 minutes for women (3.8% and 1.3% of free time respectively). By 1963, the figures had risen to 2.7 hours per week for men and 0.7 for women (6.5% and 2.5% respectively). On the subject of the “unequal” participation of women in physical recreation, M. Ripa, in her article “A Study of Time Expenditure and Interest in Physical Culture and Sport among Working Women”, concludes that lack of time is the main hindrance to women’s activity outside the home; they have to spend too much time on household duties and children’s upbringing. Their lack of interest is also attributable to the non-approval, even non-sanctioning of their sporting activity by parents and husbands—a reflection of the outmoded views that persist in Armenia (where the survey was undertaken). In the articles on the working population, utilitarian benefits of physical fitness are substantiated through a variety of statistical surveys: (i) non-participants fall sick twice as often and for three times as long as those who engage regularly in physical recreation; (ii) labour productivity is 5% higher among people who devote an average of 6 hours a week to physical exercise; sportsmen also devote more time to study and social work (Artemov); (iii) sportsmen drink and smoke less than non-sportsmen: of 262 athletes questioned, 46.9% never drank and 66% did not smoke—whereas of 296 non-athletes in the survey, only 9.8% were teetotal (Zholdak). The article “Physical Culture in Workers’ Families” analyses the popularity of various sports and the time spent on physical recreation among 1,665 families of workers employed at the Moscow Hammer and Sickle Engineering Plant.

J. W. RIORDAN.

**Teoriya i praktika fizicheskoi kul'tury i sporta.**

Stankin, M. I., *Fakul'tativny kurs. Posobie dlya uchitelya. Moscow, Prosveshchenie, 1972. 184 pp. 40,000 copies.*

**Metodika fizicheskovo vospitaniya. Uchebnoe posobie dlya uchashchikhsya shkol'nykh pedagogicheskikh uchilishch. Moscow, Prosveshchenie, 1972. 320 pp. 100,000 copies.**

Both books are recommended for the use of trainee teachers by the USSR Ministry of Education—the first for secondary-school teachers, the second for primary-school teachers. Since P.E. and games in primary classes are the concern of the ordinary class teacher, Kachashkin’s textbook is a very full but more general guide for all teachers; it is also the fourth edition of a standard work. Stankin’s book is more specific and intended for would-be teachers who opt for P.E. as a special subject at college. The course on Theory and Methodology of Physical Education at *pedinstituty*



that constitutes the framework of Kachashkin's work consists of the following : (i) an exposition of the overall aims and role of physical education in the Soviet Union; (ii) a description of the Soviet structure of P.E. and sport (including the recently amended *G.T.O.* system and the Uniform Sports Rankings); (iii) the purpose of P.E. in primary school; (iv) a detailed description of the school programme for P.E. and games; (v) advice on the P.E. lesson and gramme for P.E. and games; (v) advice on the P.E. lesson and homework; (vi) prescriptions of out-of-school physical activities, especially in the family and in Young Pioneer groups; (vii) advice on the installation, arrangement and maintenance of gymnastics and games equipment. The book also contains a supplement of suggested material for games and other physical activities, including semaphore and Morse signalling. Kachashkin defines the aims of physical education as (a) to improve health, temper the organism and raise the level of physical development and fitness for work; (b) to develop vitally important motor habits and skills, especially those of an applied nature; (c) to inculcate moral qualities; (d) to develop physical qualities such as speed, strength, skill and stamina; and (e) to master the technique of performing special exercises. Stankin's textbook follows a similar pattern and contains a supplement on a detailed school programme of Theory and Practice of Physical Culture and Sport for forms 7-10. It also has a rare 3-page bibliography of Soviet books and articles appertaining to children and physical exercise. Both books are well illustrated with sketches and diagrams and should prove of interest to anyone seeking information on P.E. and games in Soviet schools.

J. W. RIORDAN.

Many readers will be saddened by the death, just as this issue goes to press, of Dr. S. Osiakowski. He had an immense and rare knowledge of Russian and Soviet art, and made this available without stint to all who wished to share it.



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